The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art selects Emeka Ogboh for its First Commissioned Artwork in the Ames Family Atrium

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Cleveland, OH (March 8, 2019) – ***Ámà: The Gathering Place***, a new site-specific commission by Emeka Ogboh (Nigerian, b. 1977), will be presented in the Cleveland Museum of Art's Ames Family Atrium from August through November 2019. An immersive installation integrating sound, textiles and sculpture, ***Ámà: The Gathering Place*** takes as its point of departure the social role of the atrium within the museum. A soaring light-filled space at the center of the building, the atrium is used by visitors as an area for gathering and exchange, offering a lively frame for the art on display. Ogboh describes it as the "heart and soul of the museum," and compares it to the ámà—or village square—the physical and cultural center of Igbo life in southeast Nigeria, where he was born. "Both sites," Ogboh explains, "are contact zones, spaces of gathering and ritual activities in their respective settings."

Ámà: The Gathering Place is the CMA's first commissioned artwork for the atrium and part of an ongoing series of large-scale contemporary art installations that will periodically be presented in the Ames Family Atrium. "Enlivening one of Cleveland's largest freely accessible indoor civic spaces with great works of art is a wonderful extension of the CMA's mission," says William M. Griswold, director and president of the CMA. "Ogboh is an extraordinary artist, whose work previously has engaged audiences in Africa, Europe, and a very small number of other American institutions. His work beautifully aligns with the CMA's global approach, and the installation of *Ámà: The Gathering Place* in the Ames Family Atrium is certain to captivate all those who visit us during the late summer and early fall."

With ***Ámà: The Gathering Place***, parallels between the Ames Family Atrium and the Igbo village square will be activated, calling to mind the global scope of the CMA's collection. In the Igbo ámà, music is typically offered for entertainment and during solemn periods by performers wearing vibrant textiles. At the CMA, recordings of original compositions performed by Igbo choirs will fill the atrium. Sharing the music's source in Igbo folk traditions, regionally specific Akwete cloth will be integrated

with sculptural objects situated throughout the space. The Akwete on display will bear unique patterns that Ogboh is developing in collaboration with Igbo designers. ***Ámà: The Gathering Place*** will at once respond to and transform the atrium, offering an immersive welcome to museum visitors as soon as they enter the building.

"***Ámà: The Gathering Place*** continues Ogboh's multisensory approach to interpreting place, which is at the core of his art," says Emily Liebert, curator of contemporary art, and Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, curator of African art, who are organizing the project. "Through previous audio installations, Ogboh has explored how sound impacts our experience of the world around us and has used his work to address topical issues of immigration, globalization and postcolonialism."

Ogboh has participated in numerous international exhibitions, including documenta 14 (2017); Skulptur Projekte Münster (2017); the 56th edition of La Biennale di Venezia (2015); and Dakar Biennale (2014). In 2014 he was selected to create a public commission for the new Peace and Security building of the African Union in Addis Ababa. He was a finalist for the 2018 Hugo Boss Prize, and in 2016 he was awarded the Prize of the Bottcherstraße in Bremen. Ogboh is currently one of the inaugural fellows at Columbia's Institute for Ideas and Imagination in Paris.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Magazine Article: Ámà: The Gathering Place [2]

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